MULTI AWARD WINNING!

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THE WORLD'S BEST NEWS & FACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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Making sense of the world

THE WEEK Junior

THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS

THE WILD ROBOT

An award-winning book is now an action-packed film p20

DID YOU KNOW?
The first spacewalk in history was made by astronaut Alexei Leonov, from the Soviet Union, on March 18, 1965.

From left: crew members Anna Menon, Scott Poteet, Jared Isaacman, and Sarah Gillis

Helping kids from space

During the Polaris Dawn mission, crew member Anna Menon read *Kisses from Space*, a picture book she co-authored, to her children at home via livestream, and Sarah Gillis played a song from *Star Wars* on her violin. The reading and performance were posted on social media as part of the Polaris Program's efforts to raise money for charitable causes on Earth.

Polaris Dawn astronauts make history

On September 15, a private space mission named Polaris Dawn successfully came to an end after achieving several important milestones. One of them was the first spacewalk ever conducted by crew members who are not professional astronauts.

What is the Polaris Dawn mission?

Polaris Dawn is part of the Polaris Program, which is a collaboration between the aerospace company SpaceX and billionaire business executive Jared Isaacman, who is paying for the program. Polaris Dawn, which launched on September 10, is the first of three planned test flights. Its four-member crew traveled in a SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule launched by SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket. Isaacman was the mission's commander, and the pilot was Scott Poteet, a retired US Air Force officer who has flown military jets. The other crew members were SpaceX engineers Sarah Gillis and Anna Menon. In addition to space exploration, the Polaris Program works to support important causes on Earth by raising money and drawing attention to them (see box). These include St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Tennessee and El Sistema USA, which is focused on providing a musical education for all children.

A rendering of the Polaris Dawn spacewalk

Why is this mission significant?

The Polaris Dawn crew achieved several important goals. Isaacman and Gillis became the first non-professional astronauts to successfully complete a spacewalk, separately spending between seven and eight minutes outside Crew Dragon. Poteet and Menon stayed inside the capsule. About 260 people have previously conducted spacewalks, but they have all been professional astronauts working for government agencies, like NASA. Polaris Dawn also reached a height of about 870 miles above Earth's surface, which is farther into space than anyone has gone since the last Moon landing by NASA in 1972. In addition, Gillis and Menon became the first women to travel that far from Earth. The Polaris Dawn crew also tested new spacesuits designed by SpaceX and conducted dozens of science experiments.

When did the capsule return to Earth?

After spending five days in space, the Crew Dragon capsule re-entered Earth's atmosphere (a blanket of gases surrounding and protecting the planet), and its parachutes opened just after 3:30 a.m. on September 15. The vessel splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico, off the coast of Florida, and bobbed in the Atlantic Ocean until ships carrying recovery crews reached it. The Polaris Dawn crew stayed aboard the capsule until it was safely docked, then emerged and cheered, waved, and hugged their colleagues and families.

How did people react?

Isaacman said during the spacewalk, "Back at home, we all have a lot of work to do. But from here, it sure looks like a perfect world." NASA sent its congratulations on the achievement. "Today's success represents a giant leap forward for the commercial space industry," Bill Nelson, the head of the agency, wrote on social media. After the astronauts returned, SpaceX executive Gwynne Shotwell said, "It is with great relief that I welcome you home! This mission was even more extraordinary than I anticipated. Thank you all for taking this journey."

What will happen next?

Two additional Polaris missions are planned for the future. Mission II will continue the scientific research begun on Polaris Dawn. Mission III will feature the first crewed spaceflight on Starship, the world's first fully reusable transportation system designed to carry humans and cargo into Earth's orbit and to the Moon, Mars, and beyond. Launch dates for these missions have not yet been released.

UK restricts ads for junk food

The UK government announced a plan on September 12 to restrict junk food advertisements in order to reduce children's exposure to them. The ads will not be allowed on television before 9 p.m. and will be banned entirely online. The move is part of a larger effort to reduce preventable illnesses and improve children's health. Studies have shown that junk food ads influence children's food choices.

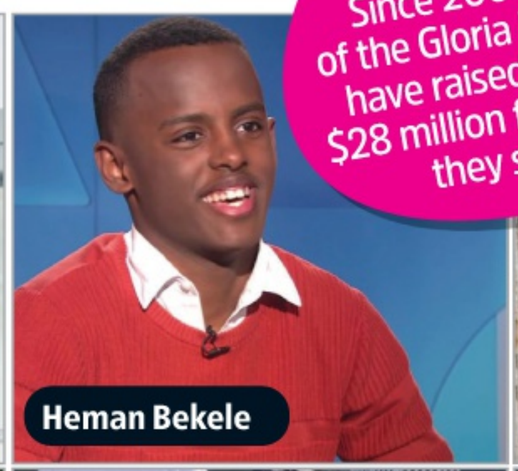
Junk foods are highly processed foods and drinks that are high in salt, fat, and sugar. Consumption of them has been shown to lead to heart disease, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, and other health problems.

The restrictions are set to go into effect on October 1, 2025. In the meantime, the government will establish clearer guidelines on which foods and drinks fall into the junk food category and which ones are exempt. The restrictions were originally announced in 2021 but were delayed so the government could review their potential impact on consumers and businesses.

Potato chip ads will be affected.

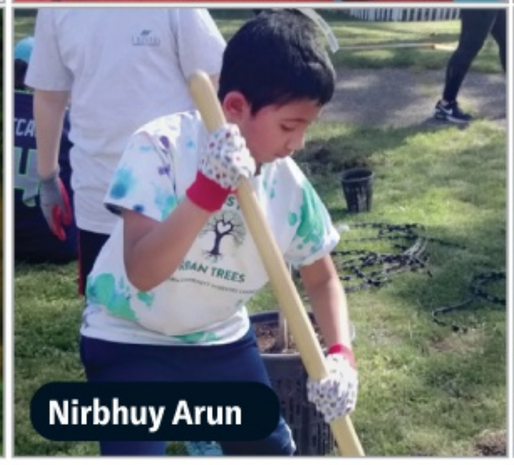
WOW! Since 2001, winners of the Gloria Barron Prize have raised more than $28 million for the causes they support.

Arya Gurumukhi


Heman Bekele

Charlotte Rosario

Alexis Nicholson


Nirbhuy Arun

William Cabaniss

Young Heroes are announced

The 2024 winners of the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes were announced on September 17. Each year, the awards honor 15 winners and 10 finalists between ages 8 and 18 who have made a positive difference in their communities. The 15 winners receive a $10,000 prize to be used for their service work or education.

The awards were created in 2001 by children's author T.A. Barron in honor of his mother, Gloria Barron. She was a teacher and also worked at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind, where she developed a nature center where everything can be touched.

Many of this year's winners were recognized for their environmental work. Arya Gurumukhi, age 15, invented a solar-powered device that uses a process like photosynthesis (when plants turn sunlight and water into energy) to create clean energy. Nirbhuy Arun, age 9, and Alexis Nicholson, age 10, are planting trees at city parks and schools and in areas with low-income housing.

Other winners found ways to help people and communities. William Cabaniss, age 18, sells homemade vanilla extract to raise money for a food bank, donating more than $210,000 to feed more than 631,000 people so far. Charlotte Rosario, age 17, is helping young photographers use their art to raise money for important causes in their communities. Heman Bekele, age 15, developed a soap that can help treat skin cancer.

For more information about this year's winners and finalists, go to barronprize.org.

IT'S AN AMAZING WEEK FOR...

A SUPER STONE FRUIT

Two farmers in South Africa set a new record for the world's heaviest plum, which weighed just over a pound. Dean and Deon Barnard said they didn't do anything special to grow the Autumn Treat variety of the fruit. "I'm so proud and excited," said Dean.

The winning plum

SAYING THANKS

The US Postal Service (USPS) is releasing a stamp thanking healthcare workers, including hospital staff, home health aides, lab technicians, scientists, nurses, doctors, and surgeons. The USPS said these workers "dedicate their lives to protect our health, safety, and well-being."

A LEGO LAP

When Formula 1 race car driver Lando Norris took a new vehicle out for a spin, he drove a little slower than usual—because the car is made of 342,817 Lego pieces. The full-size, fully functional version of a McLaren P1 sports car has 768 Lego motors and took 8,344 hours to put together. "It felt like a car," Norris said.

Lando Norris and the car

ON THE COVER: UNIVERSAL PICTURES; GETTY IMAGES; GLORIA BARRON PRIZE FOR YOUNG HEROES; NFL; ON THIS PAGE: GLORIA BARRON PRIZE FOR YOUNG HEROES (6); ALAMY; GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS; USPS; LEGO; ON LEFT PAGE: SPACEX; POLARIS VIA X; COURTESY THE PUBLISHER

Children reading at a library

DID YOU KNOW?
The first Banned Books Week was held in 1982 and now takes place every fall.

Youth honorary chair

Julia Garnett, shown above, is the youth honorary chair of Banned Books Week. She is a student activist who fought book bans at her high school in Tennessee. She has also worked with the National Coalition Against Censorship to help educate young people about their right to choose what they want to read.

Banned Books Week is observed

From September 22 to 28, the US will observe Banned Books Week, sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA). The observance takes place as the ALA released a new report showing that attempts to ban books reached an all-time high in 2023, increasing by 65%.

What is Banned Books Week?

The week promotes the right to choose what to read, and this year's theme is "Freed Between the Lines." The event highlights the benefits of allowing children to have access to a wide range of information to help them form their own opinions. This year's honorary chair is filmmaker Ava DuVernay, who has directed movies based on frequently banned books, including the award-winning children's book *A Wrinkle in Time*.

Why are books banned?

When people object to a book being available for others to read, they can try to get it taken off the shelves of their community's schools and libraries. In 2023, the ALA documented 1,247 demands to remove books and other materials in libraries. Those attempted bans targeted 4,240 book titles, the highest number since the ALA began tracking data more than 20 years ago. Most of the challenges came from campaigns targeting books written by or about people of color or LGBTQ people. Books with language or political views that some said were offensive were also challenged.

What happened this year?

School libraries received the most challenges, the ALA said, with an 11% increase from the year before. Public libraries received 92% more challenges than the year before. The ALA said this is a concern because many books challenged at public libraries have already been banned from the shelves at school libraries, reducing the availability of books in a community.

What is the ALA doing?

The ALA released a list of the top 10 books that were challenged in 2023. It is asking libraries, bookstores, and schools to share the list and to encourage people to read what they want. While the ALA said it will keep speaking out against book bans to ensure that readers don't lose access to information, it also hopes the week's observance is a celebration of books, calling on people to share their love of the "freedom found in books."

WORD OF THE WEEK

WAFFLE

The crisp cakes of batter we know as "waffles" took their name from the Dutch word *wafel*, which is based on the French word *gaufre*. *Gaufre* meant "honeycomb," and this was probably the inspiration for the name of the waffles we eat today, as their crisscross pattern resembles a honeycomb.

THE WEEK IN HISTORY

September 22, 1888

National Geographic is published

On September 22, 1888, the first issue of *National Geographic* was published by the National Geographic Society, a group of explorers and scientists who wanted to share knowledge. The first issue published science papers and a report on a historic snowstorm. Although today the magazine, which has about 1.8 million subscribers, is famous for its photography, the first issue had no photos.

The first issue

Donald Trump

Authorities investigate intruder

Former President Donald Trump was the target of what may have been an attempted assassination (plot to kill for political reasons) at his golf club in Florida on September 15. A man who had a gun and who had gone undetected for about 12 hours near the golf course grounds was arrested. Trump reported afterward that he was "safe and well." When *The Week Junior* went to press on September 17, authorities were continuing to investigate the incident.

The vehicle

New trucks for delivering mail

The US Postal Service (USPS) introduced the first of its new mail delivery vehicles in Georgia. The new trucks have many safety features that the current ones lack, such as anti-lock brakes and 360-degree cameras, as well as air-conditioning and more space for cargo. They are fuel efficient, and many are electric. The USPS said it will roll out 106,000 of the new vehicles across the US by 2028.

The cubs with their mom

Rare tiger cubs debut at zoo

Two Amur tiger cubs, named Andrei and Amaliya, made their debut at the Minnesota Zoo on September 11. They ventured to the outside area of their enclosure for the first time since they were born in May to mother Dari and father Luka as part of the zoo's plan to protect the endangered species. Scientists estimate that there are 400 to 500 Amur tigers living in the wild.

SPECIAL STATUE
The VMA trophy is modeled after one of MTV's earliest logos of an astronaut planting an MTV flag on the Moon.

Taylor Swift at the VMAs

Taylor Swift sweeps music awards

Global superstar Taylor Swift made history at the 40th MTV Video Music Awards (VMAs) on September 11 at the UBS Arena in Long Island, New York, with a record number of wins. Hosted by rapper Megan Thee Stallion, the event honored well-known artists as well as new talent.

The VMAs were launched in 1984 by MTV, and the event has become famous for its memorable performances and its influence on music trends. Winners in major categories are determined by fan votes.

Swift won seven awards, bringing her total number of VMA wins to 30, the most by any artist. She took home the night's top prize, video of the year, for her song "Fortnight," which features rapper Post Malone. It was the third year in a row that she won the top prize, previously winning for "Anti-Hero" in 2023 and "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)" in 2022.

In an acceptance speech, Swift thanked her fans for voting for her and encouraged them to vote in this year's US Presidential election. "If you are over 18, please register to vote for something else that's very important coming up," she said, the day after endorsing Vice President Kamala Harris for President. Within 24 hours of Swift's call to action, more than 300,000 people had visited Vote.gov, a voter registration site.

Chappell Roan

The award for best new artist went to Chappell Roan, who gained attention this year with hit songs such as "Good Luck Babe!," which she performed at the VMAs. In her acceptance speech, she dedicated her win to people in the LGBTQ community.

Pop star Sabrina Carpenter won the award for song of summer for her single "Espresso," which she sang that night. Singer-songwriter Katy Perry received the Video Vanguard Award, which recognizes an artist's lifetime achievements and contributions to the music video art form. That evening, Perry performed a nearly 10-minute medley of some of her top songs.

THE WEEK'S SILLIEST HEADLINE

"Semi crash covers Los Angeles freeway in french fries" *UPI*

GETTY IMAGES (3); AP (3); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2); COURTESY OF THE NCAC; NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Around the world

Battling bedbugs

Paris, France
A new treatment for bedbugs

Scientists in France have found a new way to deal with bedbugs. Last year, bedbugs caused panic when people in French cities shared videos of the tiny insects on social media. The bugs generally aren't dangerous to humans, but they can cause itchy bites and are famously difficult to get rid of. The new study claims that Terre de Sommières, a powdered clay, kills bedbugs that walk in it within 24 hours.

Riihimaki, Finland
Books back in class

Schools in a Finnish town have gone back to using books, pens, and paper after relying on screens for several years. National leaders had promoted the use of laptops and other devices in classrooms, but teachers and parents were concerned about their impact on children. Some students said their concentration improved after returning to books.

A student in Finland

The Supreme Court of Mexico

Mexico
Change to judicial system

On September 15, Mexico changed its constitution (principles for government) so that all court judges will be elected by voters. Until now, government officials had appointed the country's 7,000 judges. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said the change will reduce corruption in the judicial system, but critics argue that requiring judges to win popular votes could harm the courts' independence. Elections are expected to begin in 2025.

The cloak

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Sacred feathered cloak returned

A ceremony was held on September 12 at Brazil's National Museum to celebrate the return of a sacred cloak. Made from 4,000 scarlet ibis bird feathers, the cloak belonged to the Tupinambá people, who are Indigenous (first people known to have inhabited a place). It was taken from Brazil more than 300 years ago and had been on display in Denmark since 1689.

Cervia, Italy
Historic tournament

About 200 people participated in a special soccer (known as football in Europe) tournament from September 8–14. At the first-ever Transplant Football World Cup, each team was made up of players who had received organ transplants (operations to replace a damaged organ, such as a kidney, with a healthy one from another person). The game's rules were changed slightly to ensure safety. Eleven teams took part, and Chile was crowned the champion.

The event

JUTTA BENZENBERG/EYEVINE; REUTERS (2); RICCARDO GALLINI/GRPHOTO; GETTY IMAGES (5); SHUTTERSTOCK

Around the world

At the summit

Triana, Albania
Women's rights meeting

More than 100 women from Afghanistan gathered in Albania from September 11–13 for a summit on women's rights. Afghanistan is governed by the Taliban, a military and political group that bans women from working and girls from going to high school. The summit's goal was to involve women's voices in global conversations about Afghanistan.

A dog stroller

South Korea
Dog strollers outsell baby carriages

According to new data, last year more people in South Korea bought strollers for dogs than for children. While 43% of strollers sold in 2023 were for babies, 57% were for pets. The country's fertility rate (the average number of children each woman gives birth to) is the lowest in the world. People say issues such as the high cost of living have made them reluctant to have children, so instead they are getting pets.

Work starts on removing the waste.

Okuma, Japan
Mission to remove nuclear waste

Robots have begun trying to remove radioactive waste from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. In 2011, a tsunami (very large wave) damaged the plant, allowing dangerous radioactive material to leak out. Last week, a robot was deployed to retrieve samples of the materials that are still inside the plant. But on September 17, the mission was paused due to problems with a video feed. The total cleanup effort could take 30 years or more.

Borno, Nigeria
Dam breaks

A collapsing dam (wall-like structure that controls the flow of water) has caused flooding in northeastern Nigeria. Very heavy rain led to a buildup of pressure on the Alau dam, causing the collapse. At least 30 people died, and authorities have been rushing to provide shelter for tens of thousands of people who were forced to leave their homes. Floods also damaged buildings and caused some wild animals to escape from Sanda Kyarimi Park Zoo.

Helping people escape the floods

Older people will have to work longer.

China
Government raises retirement age

China's top lawmakers approved plans to raise the age at which adults can retire (stop working). This will be the first time the age has been raised since the 1950s. Supporters say the change is needed because the nation's pension fund, which pays retirees, is running low. Men will be allowed to retire at age 63, and women can retire at age 55 or 58, depending on their job.

Should it be illegal to text and walk?

It's not wise to look at your phone while you walk, but are bans the answer?

FUN FACT People who walk and text are sometimes called "smombies," which is a combination of the words "smartphone" and "zombie."

What you need to know

- About 97% of Americans own a cell phone, and 91% of children and teens have one by age 14.
- According to one study, from 2011 to 2019 there were 30,000 injuries caused by people looking at their phones while walking.
- In another study, 33% of teens said they texted while crossing the street.
- In 2017, Honolulu, Hawaii, became the first major US city to make "distracted walking" (using a phone when walking) illegal.

Texting while walking is so common that there's a name for it: twalking. That may sound silly, but health experts say distracted walking can pose a serious risk. Pedestrians who aren't looking up can easily bump into an object or another person, trip or fall, or step into the street without realizing they're in the path of an oncoming bike or car. People who support making twalking illegal argue that texting and driving is banned in 48 US states, so texting and walking should be outlawed as well. Those against a ban say that's going a step too far. What do you think? Should it be illegal to text and walk?

Yes—it's common sense

It's simple: If you're looking at your phone while you walk, you're putting yourself and others in danger. Walking while distracted is so bad that, in one study, people doing it were 50% less likely to notice a clown on a unicycle! Banning twalking will make people take the risks more seriously. Think about how many people didn't wear seat belts until it was required by law and the countless lives saved by making it mandatory. Studies have also shown that excessive phone use is bad for mental and physical health. If people can't look down at their phones while walking, they'll be able to look up, look around, and enjoy the world around them.

No—it's too harsh

Twalking is a bad habit and can be dangerous, but making it illegal won't solve the problem. The laws that have been put in place are hard to enforce and not very effective. Instead, local leaders should focus on creative ways to make streets safer. For example, a city in Poland added traffic lights on the sidewalk so pedestrians looking down at their phones can see them. In South Korea, lasers trigger a crosswalk warning on people's phones, and there are special walking lanes in China. Besides, people are responsible enough to learn when to put their phones down. They don't have to be monitored and punished by the government.

YES Three reasons why it should be illegal to text and walk

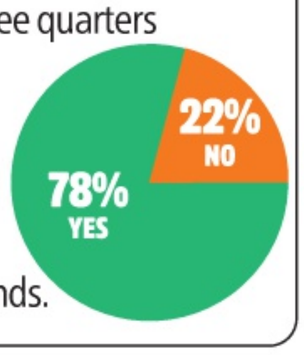
1. Making distracted walking illegal will get people to take the dangers seriously.
2. Laws to improve safety may start out being unpopular but wind up working. Look what happened with seat belts.
3. If twalking is illegal, people will be forced to take a break from their phones and reconnect with the world around them.

NO Three reasons why it should not be illegal to text and walk

1. Twalking bans have not proven to be successful in protecting people.
2. Instead of a ban, cities can find creative solutions, like lights on sidewalks, phone alerts, and pedestrian walking lanes.
3. People don't have to be policed on what to do and what not to do. They know how to take care of themselves.

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if pets should be allowed on flights. More than three quarters of you voted in favor of letting people travel with their furry friends.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote YES if you think it should be illegal to text and walk or NO if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.

GETTY IMAGES

Star behind the curtain

Stage manager Rolt Smith is now part of Broadway history.

In May, the award-winning play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* had its 1,794th performance and became the fifth-longest-running play in Broadway history. One of the people who helped it get to that historic moment is Rolt Smith, who has been the production's stage manager since its Broadway debut in 2018. His role, he told *The Week Junior*, is to "maintain the artistic vision of the director and designers and keep it fresh."

Smith, who grew up outside New York City, always loved theater. In high school, after he tried out for a play and didn't get an acting part, he joined the stage crew instead. "[It] opened up a whole world for me," Smith said.

He attended the University of Rhode Island, where he was one of the first students in its stage management program. "You don't need to go to college to work in the theater, but it offers more opportunities to understand the business and train." He has worked on Broadway for more than 20 years, with production roles in shows that include the hit musical *Kinky Boots*.

The play poster

Harry Potter and the Cursed Child was written by Jack Thorne and based on a story by J.K. Rowling. It is set 19 years after the final Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, and focuses on Harry's middle child, Albus, as he grapples with his family's legacy. The play premiered in London in 2016.

As stage manager, Smith handles technical elements, coordinates scene transitions, and ensures that special effects—like stage vibrations that represent time travel—are executed seamlessly.

Smith said he especially likes how student groups can come to the show and learn about the magic of the theater world.

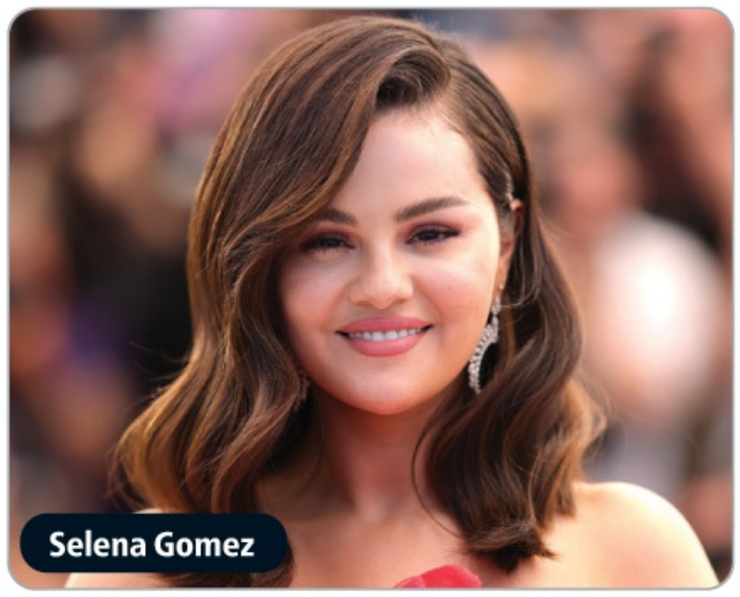
Rolt Smith

AWARD ALERT
The Broadway show Harry Potter and the Cursed Child won six Tony Awards, including for best play.

A top fishing honor

Lucy Moore, a 12-year-old from Maryland, has become the first female and youngest recipient of her state's Master Angler Milestone Award. It is presented by Maryland's Department of Natural Resources to people who catch 10 different types of "trophy-size" (large) fish over time. Moore began fishing at age 2 and caught 54 different species by the end of 2023. She caught her 10th qualifying trophy-size fish in May. Moore told *The Week Junior* she was "overcome with joy and happiness" about the achievement.

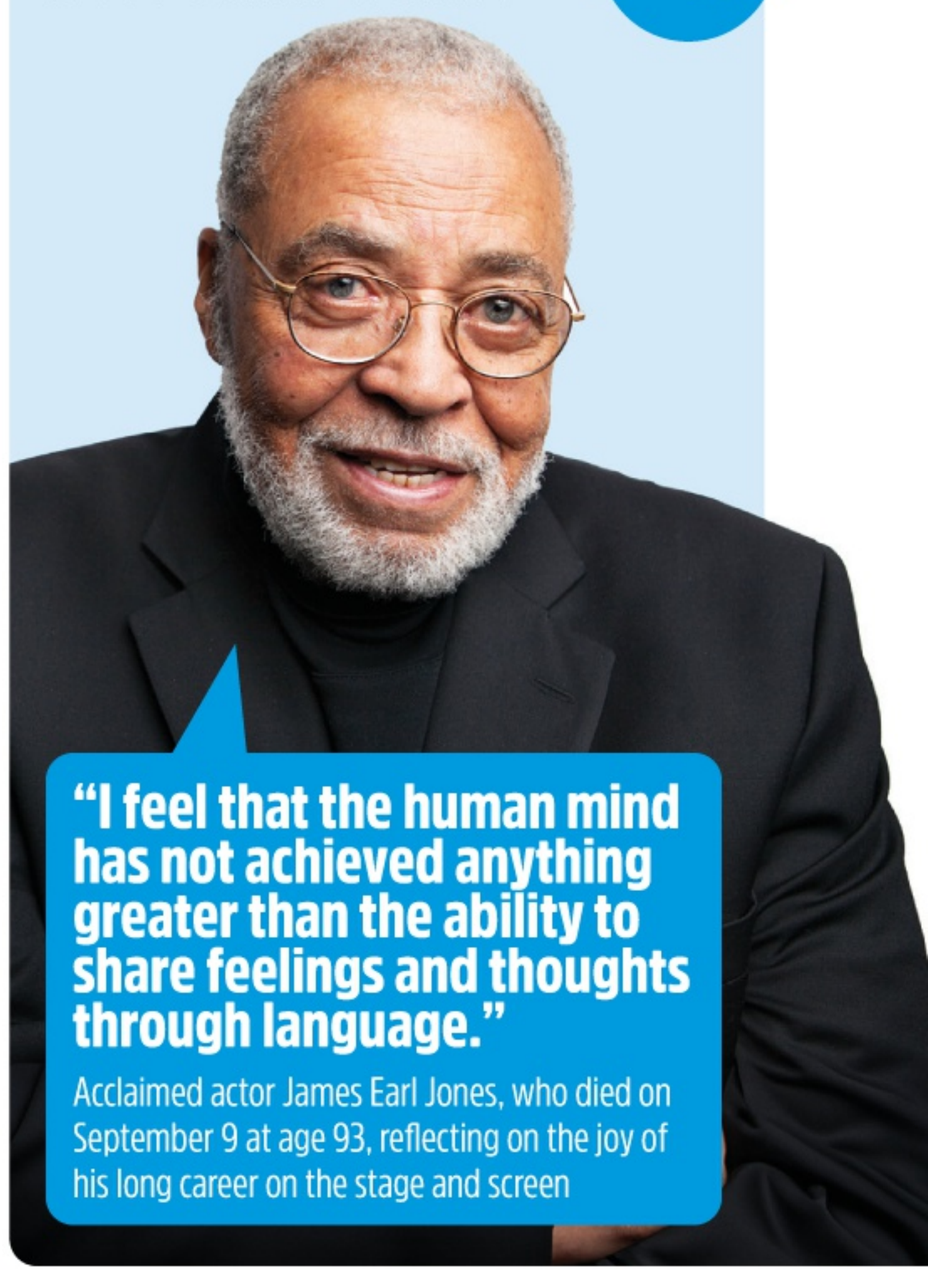
Lucy Moore


Selena Gomez

Making a big impact

Singer and actress Selena Gomez, age 32, is leading a major effort to enhance mental health support in US schools through her Rare Impact Fund. It has secured more than $1.5 million from Google, which is also contributing $25 million to related projects on DonorsChoose, a nonprofit for public school teachers. The money will go toward programs such as training sessions to help teachers respond to students' mental concerns. Gomez, who has been open about her own mental health struggles, said, "As young people find their way through the world, it's crucial they get guidance."

OVERHEARD



"I feel that the human mind has not achieved anything greater than the ability to share feelings and thoughts through language."

Acclaimed actor James Earl Jones, who died on September 9 at age 93, reflecting on the joy of his long career on the stage and screen

COURTESY OF ROLT SMITH; MATTHEW MURPHY; NICK PEREZ; GETTY IMAGES (2)

CLEVER CHIMPS
Chimpanzees are known to use tools, such as sticks, stones, and leaves, to obtain food and water.

Some experts think chimps can be taught to talk.

Studying sounds

Scientists have found a new way to visually represent animal sounds. Using technology that was designed for studies of brain waves, they were able to analyze the sounds of elephants, whales, cassowaries, and crocodiles. This technique is helping experts study animals' calls and the effect of noise in their habitats.

Elephants

Can chimpanzees learn to speak?

For many years, humans have thought that our ability to speak makes us different from other primates. During the 20th century, studies of apes adopted by humans found that they were unable to form simple words, and a 2016 study also found that monkey brains are not developed enough to learn to talk. But a new analysis suggests that non-human apes have a greater capacity for speech than was believed.

Axel Ekström of the KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden believed apes were capable of talking. He thought they had failed to speak in past studies because researchers had mistreated the animals. For evidence of their abilities, Ekström looked for recordings of apes being trained to say simple words. He first found a 1959 documentary about a chimpanzee named Viki, who had trouble forming vowels while trying to say "papa" and "cup."

Viki with her trainer

But two more videos seemed more promising. One showed a chimpanzee named Johnny responding when a woman at a Florida sanctuary asked him, "Can you say 'mama'?" Another video, from a 1962 news report, featured a chimp named Renata. When prompted by a handler, Renata also seemed to say "mama," one of the first words many human children learn to say.

To confirm that the chimps had produced human-like words, Ekström's team played the audio of the apes vocalizing for 61 people. Listeners, who didn't know the source of the sounds, were asked to write down what they thought they heard. Most people recognized the vocalizations as the word "mama." The team says this is evidence that chimpanzees can learn new words and speak similarly to human babies.

Some scientists are not convinced. One told *The New York Times* that instead of speech, the sounds from Johnny and Renata could be two ape "pant-grunt" vocalizations paired together. If chimps can learn to talk, though, this suggests that the basic building blocks of speech first developed in the brain of a common ancestor of humans and chimps. Ekström is now studying fossils for clues.

PLACE OF THE WEEK

Sweetwater Creek State Park, Georgia

Minutes away from Atlanta, Georgia, Sweetwater Creek State Park has more than 2,500 acres of trails, campsites, lakes, and forests. In addition to its namesake creek, the park includes the 215-acre George Sparks Reservoir, which offers boating and fishing and a scenic area for picnicking or feeding the ducks. A visitor center features displays of local wildlife, including river otters, muskrats, crows, nighthawks, armadillos, and bobcats. History lovers can also tour the ruins of a historical textile mill that burned down during the Civil War (1861–1865).

A muskrat

DIVING CHAMPIONS
Peregrine falcons are one of the world's fastest birds. They can dive at speeds of up to 200 miles per hour.

A peregrine falcon

Rock climbers help peregrine falcons

Peregrine falcons have made a comeback in California's Yosemite National Park, and rock climbers played a surprising role.

The US population of peregrine falcons steeply declined after people started using toxic chemicals to control pests in the 1940s. By the time peregrine falcons were added to the Endangered Species List in 1970, the birds had disappeared from Yosemite. The chemicals were soon banned, and the falcons started showing signs of recovery.

Peregrine falcons like to lay their eggs on the ledges of tall cliffs. In 1978, four rock climbers discovered a nest on Yosemite's El Capitan wall. The delicate eggs were unlikely to survive in the wild, so conservationists worked with climbers to save them. After rock climbers removed the eggs, experts safely hatched the eggs in a lab. Climbers then returned the chicks to the nest.

Park officials have continued working with climbers ever since. Today, peregrine falcons are no longer endangered, but teams still monitor nesting sites and protect nests. About 385 peregrine falcons have been born at Yosemite in the past 15 years.

Animal of the week: Persian onager

Chester Zoo in the UK welcomed the birth of an extremely rare Persian onager foal and named him Jasper, from a Persian word for "treasure." A relative of donkeys, Persian onagers are a type of Asiatic wild ass. Fewer than 600 live in the wild.

- **LIFE SPAN:** About 40 years
- **HABITAT:** Deserts in Iran
- **SIZE:** About 4.9 feet tall and 6.5 feet long
- **DIET:** Grasses, bushes, herbs, and foliage
- **FUN FACT:** In order to survive in the desert, Persian onagers can dig 2 feet deep to find water.

Good week / Bad week

Eastern oysters

Oysters are recovering in New York Harbor, which once held half of the world's oyster beds but lost many of them in the past century. An organization working to restore them said there are now about 122 million oysters in the area.

The Great Barrier Reef

According to a new study, Australia's Great Barrier Reef is experiencing the highest sea surface temperatures recorded in 400 years. This has caused major coral bleaching, in which coral becomes stressed, loses its color, and may die.

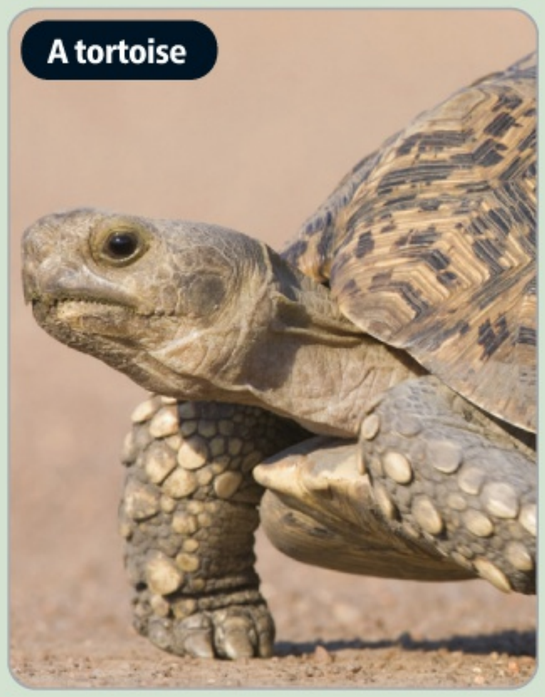
Ask an expert

"Why are tortoises so slow?"

Mira, 10, New York

Jillian Gamsby
Senior animal care specialist, Brookfield Zoo

Some animals, like cheetahs, need to move quickly to catch their prey. Others, like rabbits, need to get away from predators. Tortoises don't have to flee or chase—they can tuck into a hard shell to protect themselves, and as plant-eaters they don't need to run to catch a delicious leaf!



A tortoise

Do you have a question for an animal expert? Send it to *hello@theweekjunior.com*. Find out more about the Brookfield Zoo at brookfieldzoo.org.

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A popular flavor for

A sure sign of autumn is the arrival of pumpkin spice sips and treats.

Americans spend about $500 million on pumpkin spice products each year. Let's look at how this spice blend went from a pie seasoning to the undisputed flavor of fall.

Some of the Spice Islands

What is pumpkin spice?

Pumpkin spice—also called pumpkin pie spice—is typically a combination of ground sweet and savory spices, including cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, and allspice. These spices are native to islands around Southeast Asia known as the Spice Islands. In the early 1600s, the Dutch began to take over the Spice Islands from the Portuguese. Through a trading company called the Dutch East India Company, the spice market exploded in Europe. The earliest known recipe containing pumpkin spice was for "pumpion pye" (pumpkin pie) in the UK in 1675.

A 1934 spice tin

Arrival in the US

As Dutch colonists settled in America in the 17th century, they brought their spices with them. The first pumpkin spice recipe in a US cookbook appeared in 1796, in Amelia Simmons' *American Cookery*, as "pompkin pie spice," which included nutmeg, mace, and ginger. In 1934, McCormick & Company, a major spice brand, started selling its pumpkin pie spice. A pre-mixed blend of spices made life easier for cooks who now had to buy only one spice instead of several for their breads and pies.

WOW! The heaviest pumpkin ever grown was in 2023 in California and weighed 2,749 pounds.

DID YOU KNOW? India contributes more than 70% of the world's spices and is known as the Spice Capital of the World.

Sweet and savory spices give pumpkin spice drinks their flavor.

GETTY IMAGES (2); ERICA CLARK FOR STONE KITCHEN CREATIVE; BELLIN VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; COURTESY OF MCCORMICK; STARBUCKS

the fall season

Make a pumpkin smoothie

- 1 large banana, frozen
- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 cup pure canned pumpkin
- ½ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 1 cup milk (such as almond, oat, soy, or regular)

Ask for an adult's permission before you use a blender. Combine all ingredients in the blender and purée until smooth. Makes 2 smoothies.

FUN FACT
Pumpkin spice does not contain any actual pumpkin flavor. Nutmeg is considered the most essential ingredient.

Fall treats from Starbucks

An instant success

In 2003, Starbucks executives wanted to add a new seasonal beverage to the coffee company's fall menu. It created a Pumpkin Spice Latte in its "Liquid Lab," where researchers experimented with new flavors. The first new lattes were sold in Vancouver, Canada, and Washington, DC, and were an immediate hit with customers. The drink became the chain's best-selling seasonal beverage. Following Starbucks' success, Dunkin' and McDonald's launched their own pumpkin spice beverages. Restaurants also began to make pumpkin spice foods, from pancakes to pizza. Today, as the fall season approaches, grocery store shelves are stocked with pumpkin spice Oreos, cereals, pasta sauce, and even Pumpkin Spice Spam.

A Thanksgiving meal

The science of a scent

Pumpkin spice is most popular in the US and Canada, where it is closely associated with comfort and coziness. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University discovered that smell plays a significant part in the appeal of pumpkin spice. Its scent reminds people of positive family memories, such as Halloween and Thanksgiving. Starbucks' Pumpkin Spice Latte is now sold in 82 countries around the world. However, not everyone loves pumpkin spice: In one survey, 10% of Americans surveyed said they've argued with a friend or family member over their opinion of pumpkin spice coffee. While pumpkin spice is still considered the trending flavor of the season in the US, other fall flavors like cinnamon, salted caramel, and candy apple are growing in popularity.

A rendering of Odaraia alata

WOW! More than 60,000 fossil specimens have been recovered from the Burgess Shale formation in Canada.

How a prehistoric sea "taco" ate

For many years, scientists knew that an ancient sea creature called Odaraia alata was shaped like a taco and looked like a shrimp. They knew little else about it, including how it ate. In a new study, researchers have solved that mystery.

Odaraia alata was about 8 inches long and lived between 520 to 512 million years ago. Its fossils were first found in 1912 in a rock formation in Canada called the Burgess Shale. Odaraia has a head shield that surrounds its body like a tube, giving it a taco-like appearance. Modern-day creatures like fan shrimp have a similar shield. Odaraia's head, which had large eyes on top of short stalks, stuck out of one end of its shell, and its tail stuck out of the other. Other than that, however, "Many things about Odaraia were still secret to us," said the study's lead author, Alejandro Izquierdo López.

An Odaraia alata fossil

To try to learn more about Odaraia, Izquierdo López and his team examined 150 fossils at Canada's Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) that had not been analyzed before. More than 20 of them had well preserved heads and legs. These soft parts of the body don't usually survive over millions of years, making them very rare.

This allowed the team to identify Odaraia's mandibles (jaw-like features used to eat food), rows of tiny teeth, and one large tooth. These features meant Odaraia belonged to a group of animals called mandibulates, which includes more than half of the known species of animals currently living. Modern mandibulates include centipedes, bees, and sea crabs. Odaraia is one of the oldest known mandibulates.

The team also determined that Odaraia had more than 30 pairs of legs, each covered in dozens of spines of different sizes. Describing the legs as "very bizarre," Izquierdo López said the spines locked together to form a net-like structure.

Odaraia swam upside down, and as it moved, its legs drew water through its taco-shaped shell. The leg net served as a filter, collecting plankton and other marine creatures. Odaraia moved its catch up to its mouth, where it used its mandibles and teeth to chew up its meal.

These discoveries will help researchers learn more about how mandibulates evolved into modern creatures. "It's sometimes good to just sit down and wonder what happened 500 million years ago," Izquierdo López said.

A prehistoric predator

Scientists have identified an extinct prehistoric predator that would have looked like a giant salamander. The species, called Gaiasia jennyae (see illustration at right), lived in what is now Namibia about 280 million years ago. It was more than 8 feet long, with a powerful jaw it could have used to capture large prey.

Gaiasia jennyae was possibly the largest creature of its kind and may have stayed near the bottoms of swamps and lakes to catch its prey by surprise. "It's got a big, flat, toilet-seat-shaped head, which allows it to open its mouth and suck in prey," says Jason Pardo, one of the authors of a new study describing the creature. "It has these huge fangs—the whole front of the mouth is just giant teeth."

Secret ingredient in Rembrandt's work revealed

Scientists discovered how renowned Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn achieved an intriguing golden glow in his most famous painting, *The Night Watch*. They found that he used arsenic sulfide, a naturally occurring mineral that he hadn't used before.

The artist completed *The Night Watch* in 1642. It's about 12 feet tall and 14 feet wide and shows members of the police force of Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands. The two main subjects are a police captain and his lieutenant.

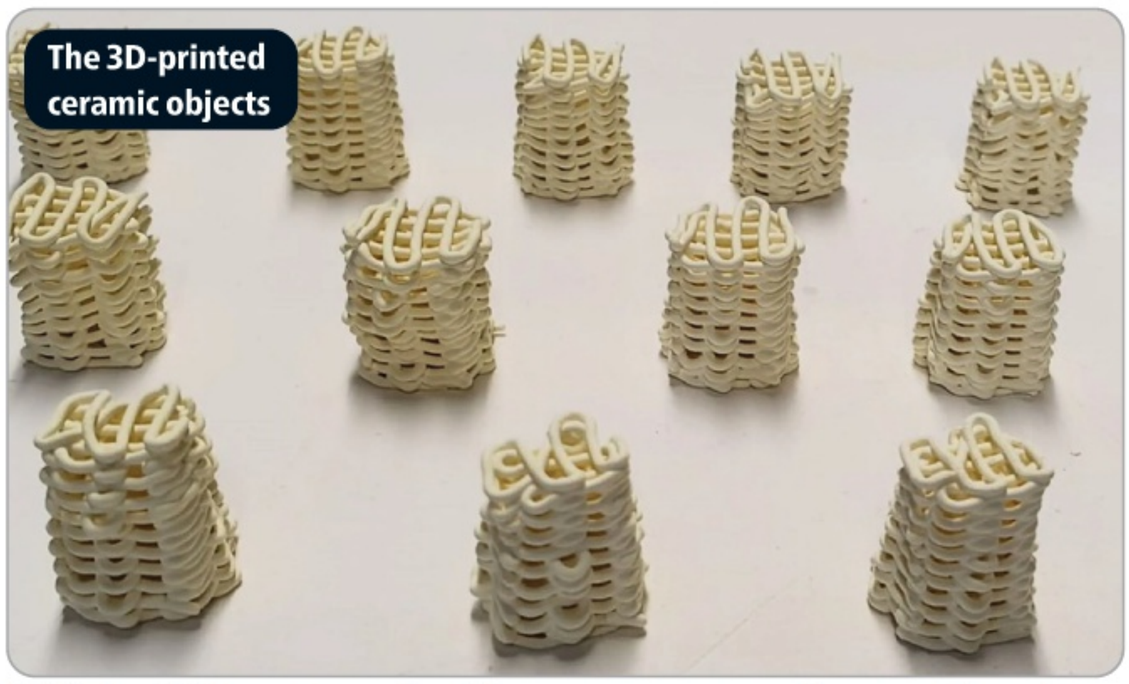
The research was conducted as part of a project called Operation Night Watch at the Rijksmuseum, an art and history museum in Amsterdam. Experts have been studying the painting since 2019. By understanding the materials Rembrandt used, the team can repair and preserve it for future generations.

The experts used advanced x-ray scans and other non-invasive techniques to analyze the lieutenant's clothes. They expected to find that the artist had used common pigments like orpiment but instead found two rare types of arsenic sulfide: pararealgar, which had a yellow color, and semi-amorphous pararealgar, a red-orange. Arsenic has a crystal structure that reflects light, giving it the shine that's visible in the painting. Rembrandt mixed these with other pigments to achieve the clothing's glow.

The team also combed through medical and sales records from Rembrandt's time to confirm that these materials were available to him.

SIZING DOWN
Rembrandt's painting *The Night Watch* was once much bigger but was cut down to fit inside a building.

The police captain (left) and the lieutenant, whose clothing has a golden glow


The 3D-printed ceramic objects

"Waffle stacks" remove chemicals

Scientists in the UK are using 3D-printed ceramics to remove per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) from wastewater. Found in everyday items like nonstick pans and electronics, PFAS are called "forever chemicals" because they don't break down naturally and are hazardous for hundreds of years. Studies have shown that PFAS can cause health problems in humans.

The ceramic objects look like stacks of waffles and are infused with indium oxide, a compound that soaks up the PFAS. The blocks are put into polluted water for a few hours. When they're removed, they take the hazardous chemicals with them. In testing, they removed up to 75% of PFAS from the wastewater.

The 3D-printing process is simple, and using the waffle stacks is fast and does not require any electricity or other energy. The blocks can be treated to remove the chemicals and reused multiple times.

AMAZING INVENTION

A folding electric skateboard

Linky

The world's first folding electric skateboard is easy to take on the go. Linky, which is made by a company in Italy, can be folded up and tucked into a backpack or other carrier. Users can take Linky on the bus or train, then quickly open it when they want to ride it.

Linky has two motors, a remote control to help steer, and a range of up to 11 miles on one charge. It can handle hills and hit a top speed of 22 miles per hour. A light on the front makes night riding safer, while optional all-terrain wheels create a smooth ride on bumpy surfaces.

REMBRANDT VAN RIJN: UNIVERSITY OF BATH; LINKY INNOVATION: ON LEFT PAGE: ILLUSTRATED BY DANIELLE DUFAULT/COURTESY ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM; GABRIEL LIO; JEAN-BERNARD CARON/ ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Photos of the week

Mirror image
Jake Wilton captured a baby turtle's reflection in the water off Papua New Guinea.

Sea and sky
Pelicans dive for fish in this photograph taken by Merche Llobera in Mexico.

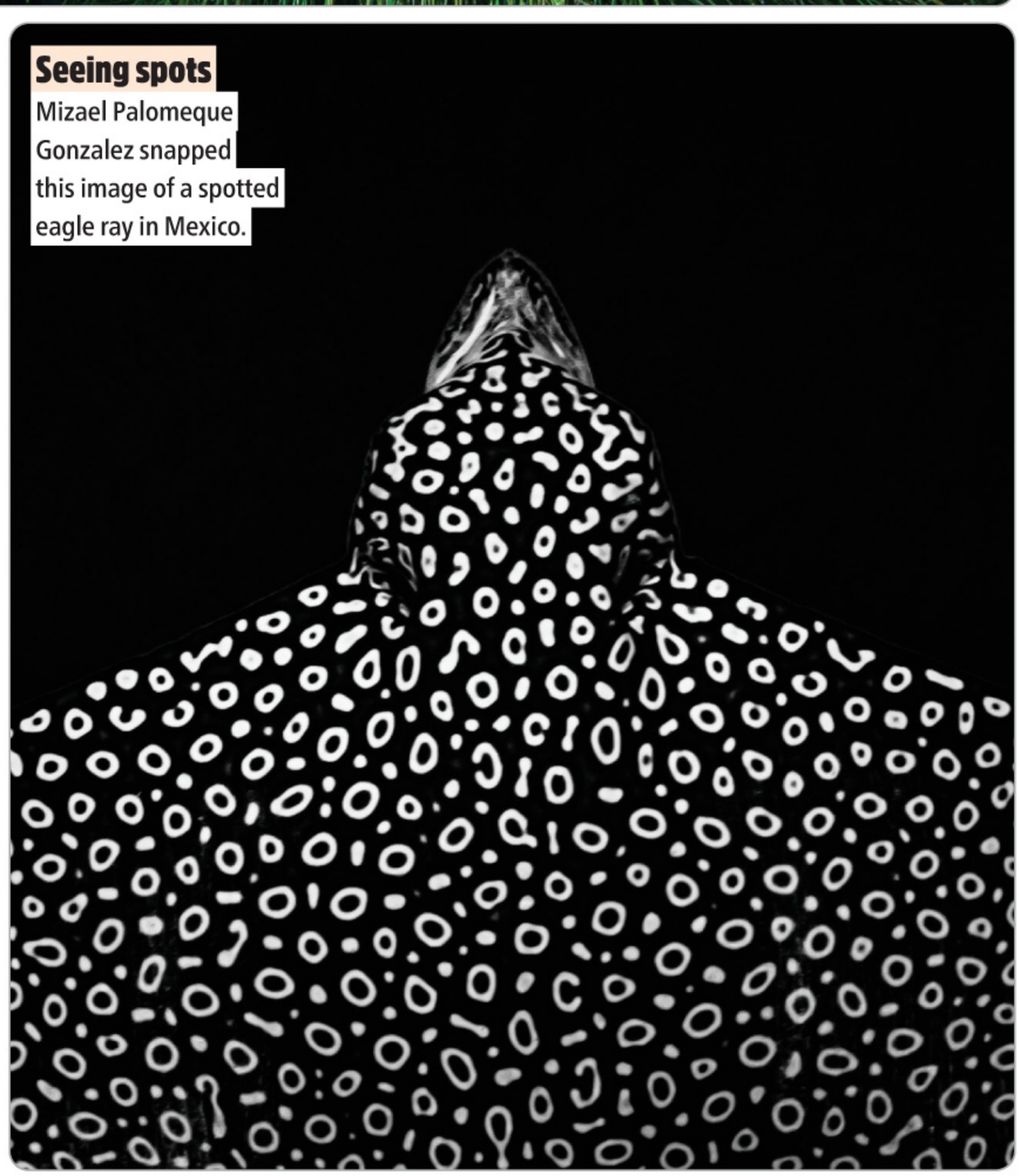
AJIEX DHARMA; ANDREY SHPATAK; CLAYTON HARRIS; JAKE WILTON; MERCHE LLOBERA; MIZAEL PALOMEQUE GONZALEZ

Photos of the week

Colorful crustacean
This shot of a peacock mantis shrimp was taken by Ajiex Dharma in Indonesia.

Well armed
This picture of a giant Pacific octopus in Russia was shot by Andrey Shpatak.

Massive splash
Clayton Harris took this photo of a humpback whale in Australia.



Seeing spots
Mizael Palomeque Gonzalez snapped this image of a spotted eagle ray in Mexico.

FUN FACT
Marcus Mariota of the Washington Commanders is the first NFL quarterback to wear the number 0.

The Cincinnati Bengals and the Kansas City Chiefs

New head protection

The NFL is now allowing players to wear helmet covers called Guardian Caps, which can help reduce the impact of hits by at least 10%. A few players have used them in games, including Jabrill Peppers of the New England Patriots and Josh Whyle of the Tennessee Titans.

Exciting start to NFL season

The 2024–2025 NFL (National Football League) season began on September 5. History was made during Week 1 with the first-ever NFL game played in Brazil. The Kansas City Chiefs, who are the league's two-time defending champions, are expected to be one of the best teams again. They are attempting to become the first NFL team to win three Super Bowls in a row.

One big change this season is the addition of the dynamic kickoff rule, which was introduced to help increase kickoff returns. During a kickoff, the area between the receiving team's end zone and 20-yard line is now known as the "landing zone." If a kicked ball hits that area and stays there, it must be returned. Another part of the rule, designed to help prevent injuries, is that players on the kicking team cannot move until the ball lands or is caught.

Justin Jefferson

NFL Week 2 was filled with thrilling action, including a 26–25 Chiefs win over the Cincinnati Bengals on September 15. Early in the fourth quarter, the Bengals had the ball and a 22–17 lead, but the Chiefs defense forced a fumble and returned the ball for a touchdown that put them up 23–22. With just under 10 minutes to play, the Bengals kicked a field goal to regain the lead. However, right before the game ended, Kansas City kicker Harrison Butker was able to make a 51-yard field goal to grab the victory.

The same day, there were six upsets by underdogs. In one game, the Las Vegas Raiders erased a 10-point deficit in the fourth quarter to beat the Baltimore Ravens, 26–23. Last season, the Ravens led the NFL with 13 regular season wins. They will look for their first win in Week 3.

In another stunner, the Minnesota Vikings beat last year's National Football Conference champions, the San Francisco 49ers, 23–17. Minnesota wide receiver Justin Jefferson played a huge role in the game. He racked up 133 receiving yards, which included a 97-yard touchdown.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers, meanwhile, secured a surprising 20–16 win on the road over the Detroit Lions to improve to 2–0. Tampa Bay wide receiver Chris Godwin finished the game with 117 receiving yards and a touchdown.

THIS WEEK'S WINNERS...

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

Los Angeles Dodgers star Shohei Ohtani hit his 47th home run and stole his 48th base of the year on September 11. No MLB player has ever done that in one season. The day before, Kyle Schwarber of the Philadelphia Phillies hit his 14th leadoff home run of the season, a new MLB single-season record, while Manny Machado hit his 164th home run for the San Diego Padres, breaking a team record that was set in 1974.

The Solheim Cup winners

GOLF

On September 15, the US beat Europe to win the Solheim Cup, a team competition featuring the top female golfers. The US last won it in 2017.

BASKETBALL

Las Vegas Aces star A'ja Wilson scored 29 points in an 84–71 win over the Connecticut Sun on September 15. During the game, she became the first player in WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) history to score 1,000 points in a single season.

BIKING RECORD
The longest distance ever cycled in a year by a male or a female is 86,573.2 miles.

Lael Wilcox

US cyclist finishes historic ride

In May, American cyclist Lael Wilcox got on her bike in Chicago, Illinois, and set off on a journey to circumnavigate (go around) the globe. On September 11, she arrived back in Chicago after passing through 21 countries. She traveled 18,125 miles in 108 days, 12 hours, and 12 minutes, which is expected to be certified as a new women's world record.

Wilcox, age 38, began riding a bike to work when she was in her 20s. In 2015, she started ultra distance racing, which involves rides that are at least 200 kilometers (about 125 miles) and six hours long. She holds records in the Tour Divide, a 2,745-mile race, and the 4,400-mile Trans Am.

Guinness World Records said that on a ride that circles the world, a cyclist must travel in one direction, start and end in the same place, rack up at least 18,000 miles (the circumference of the globe), and reach points on opposite sides of the Earth. The previous women's record was set by Scottish cyclist Jenny Graham in 2018. Her trip lasted 124 days and 11 hours.

Wilcox began by cycling from Chicago to New York. She then flew to Portugal and rode from there through countries including the Netherlands, Croatia, and Turkey. When she reached Georgia, she flew to Australia. After a coast-to-coast ride, she went to New Zealand before flying back to North America. Her final leg was from her hometown of Anchorage, Alaska, to Chicago.

Wilcox typically rode for 12 hours a day and slept in hotels most nights. She tracked her journey online so people could join her on the road. "It was probably the most fun ride of my life," she said.

COACH OF THE WEEK

Coach's Name: **Brian McCarty**

Team: **Red Devils (basketball)**

"Coach Brian teaches us how to improve our skills and learn new plays but makes it really fun! Our line is called 'Candy Cane,' and we have a play called 'Flamingo.' We even have a distraction play where we pretend to be animals! He is encouraging and always finds something good at the end of each game, even if we lost. When you don't understand something, he is kind and patient. He is the best coach *and* dad—I should know, he's mine!" Evie, 10, Maryland

To nominate a Coach of the Week, send your coach's name, photo, sport, and team to *hello@theweekjunior.com*. Include your name, age, state, and a few reasons why your coach is great.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Abby McCulloh

AGE: 21 SPORT: SWIMMING
TEAM: UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Diving in When I was young, I tried gymnastics, tennis, and ballet, but I was really clumsy, so my parents thought I should try something low-impact. I started summer league swimming when I was 8 or 9 years old. I loved it so much. I loved the sound of the water and the way the sunlight reflects through it. I also loved having a competitive outlet and being able to compete with myself.

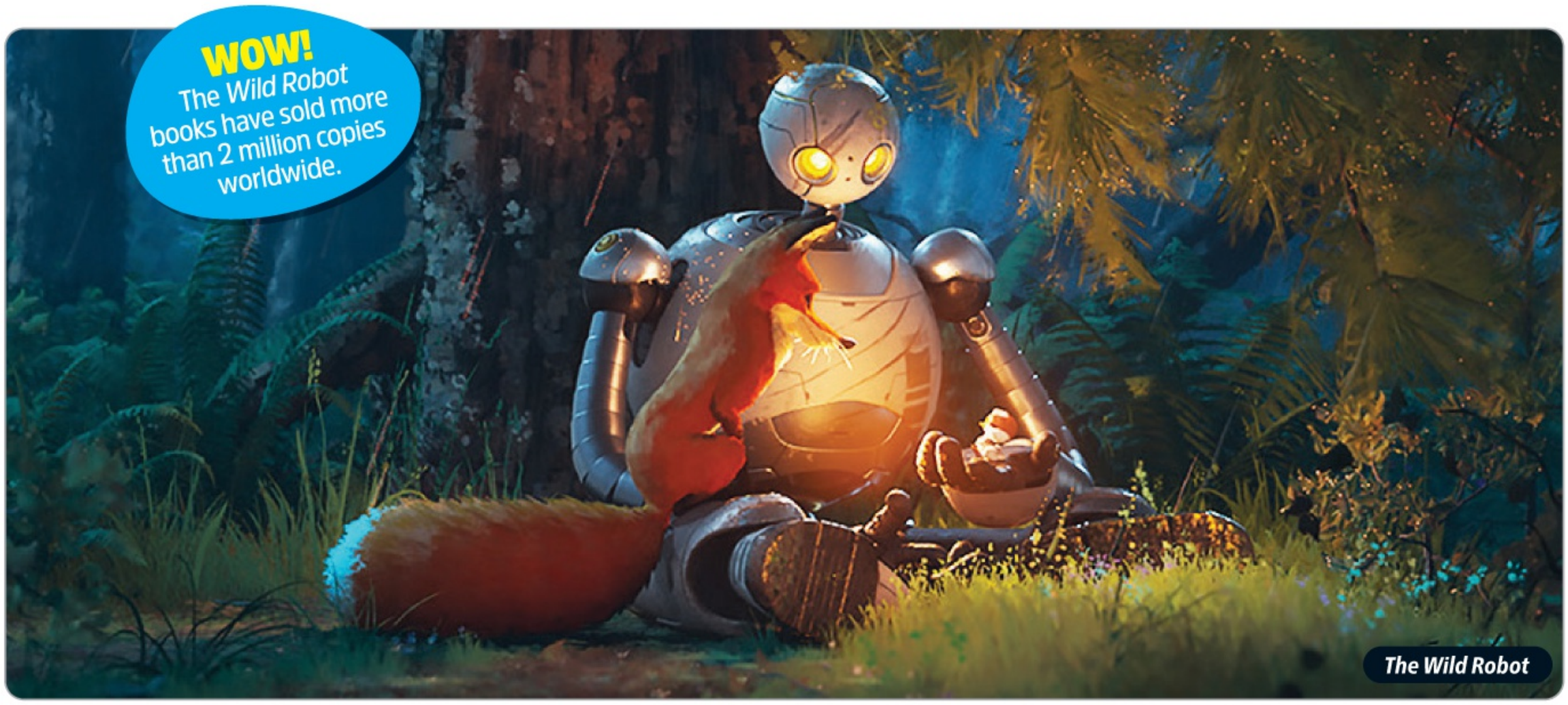
Keeping calm I used to be held down by performance anxiety and anxiety in general. When I was about 9, there were times I was almost incapable of swimming because I was shaking so much. I've worked hard to get to a point where I can be happy behind the starting blocks, enjoy racing, and focus on my teammates. If you can be mentally sound and healthy throughout the week and throughout life, you're going to be more prepared when you get to that vital moment.

Lead role This past year, I was voted class captain. Knowing I have the ability to have an impact on other people's careers and be there for them is probably my biggest accomplishment.

Savoring wins Every failure is what makes success so much more meaningful. You know how much you've had to overcome and how many times you've lost to get to that point. I think if you won every single time, it wouldn't be as fun.

Wise words Work as hard as you can, but don't put too much pressure on yourself—results aren't everything. When you're a good teammate and you work hard, things end up working out.

AP; GEORGIA ATHLETICS (2); ON LEFT SIDE: AP (2); GETTY IMAGES (2)



WOW! The *Wild Robot* books have sold more than 2 million copies worldwide.

The Wild Robot

The Wild Robot becomes a film

In the new animated version of the popular book, a robot defies expectations when she is stranded in the wild.

Peter Brown's illustrated novel *The Wild Robot* became a best-seller when it was published in 2016. Now the heartwarming story has been turned into an animated film that arrives in theaters on September 27. In early reviews, many critics have said it is one of the best movies of the year.

The Wild Robot centers on the robot Rozzum 7134, nicknamed "Roz." After a storm, she ends up on a deserted island where she initially struggles to fit in with the local animal inhabitants. She ends up caring for an orphaned baby goose, Brightbill, and finds support from new friends. In the film, Roz is voiced by *Black Panther* star Lupita Nyong'o.

Chris Sanders

The film was written and directed by Chris Sanders, who co-wrote movies such as *How to Train Your Dragon* and *The Croods*. He told *The Week Junior* that he changed some elements of the original *Wild Robot* story to make it work as a movie.

The film's animation style was inspired by classics like *Bambi* and *My Neighbor Totoro*. It is mostly hand-painted and has visible brushstrokes like the illustrations in Brown's book. "The skies are old-fashioned matte paintings, as are the trees," Sanders said. Roz is the only character who was made with computer-generated imagery (CGI). "She literally doesn't fit in visually," Sanders said. But as time passes, Roz ends up looking more like the other characters and her voice becomes more relaxed and less robotic.

Key themes in the film are accepting change and adapting to new situations. Roz is also able to survive in the wild because of her "relentless kindness and willingness to help," Sanders said. Because of that, he added, "she begins to change the culture of the island. That's one thing I hope really resonates with people."

The *Wild Robot* trilogy

The Wild Robot

The idea for Peter Brown's first book in this series was inspired by his 2009 picture book, *The Curious Garden*, about a boy becoming a vibrant gardener in a gray city.

The Wild Robot Escapes

In this 2018 sequel, Roz is taken from the island and repurposed in a robotics facility. The film explores how technology affects her experiences and relationships.

The Wild Robot Protects

This book, published in 2023, delves deeper into themes about preserving the natural world. It finds a reunited Roz and Brightbill trying to save their island from a toxic tide.

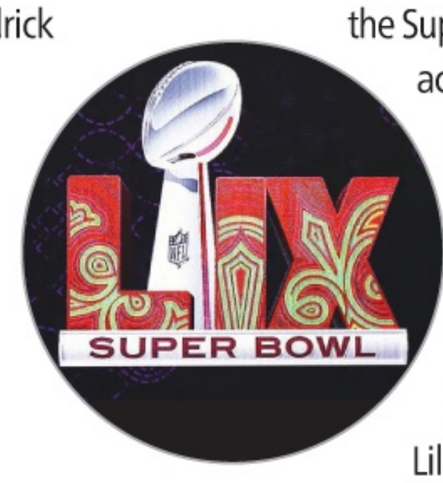
POP PAIRING
Kendrick Lamar collaborated with Taylor Swift on her hit song "Bad Blood."

Kendrick Lamar

2025 Super Bowl performer revealed

The NFL (National Football League) has announced that award-winning rapper Kendrick Lamar will headline the 2025 Apple Music Super Bowl LIX Halftime Show. It is set to take place at Caesars Superdome in New Orleans, Louisiana, on February 9, and will air live on Fox.

Lamar, whose full name is Kendrick Lamar Duckworth, began making music as a teen and became a star after the release of his album *Good Kid, m.A.A.d City* in 2012. He has won 17 Grammys (top music award) and was the first rapper to win a Pulitzer Prize (prestigious award for journalism and the arts). This year, he had three top 10 hits: "Like That," a collaboration with Future and Metro Boomin; "Euphoria"; and "Not Like Us," a song about his well-known feud with rapper Drake.



Headlining a Super Bowl Halftime Show is a major accomplishment in the music world, and this will be Lamar's second time doing it. In 2022, he was part of a group of hip-hop headliners with Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Eminem, and Mary J. Blige. One of the telecast's executive producers is the record company Roc Nation, which is owned by hip-hop star Jay-Z. Officials from the NFL, Roc Nation, and the Super Bowl host city choose the halftime act based on fan followings and how an artist represents pop culture. Jay-Z called Lamar "truly a once-in-a-generation artist and performer," but not everyone thinks the rapper, who is from California, should have been selected this year. Fans of rapper Lil Wayne believe he should have been chosen instead because he is from New Orleans.

Plans for Lamar's performance, which will likely last about 12 to 15 minutes, are unknown. But in the announcement, he said, "Rap music is still the most impactful genre to date. And I'll be there to remind the world why."

READER RECOMMENDS

A.N.T. Farm *(Hulu, Disney+, or rent on other platforms)*
"This hilarious sitcom is about 11-year-old Chyna, a musical prodigy who can play many instruments. When she is put in the A.N.T. (Advanced Natural Talents) program, she has to skip grades and move from middle to high school. She makes friends with Olive, who has an incredible memory, and Fletcher, an artistic genius. They struggle to fit in with the rest of the school and face bullies such as Queen Bee Lexi. Chyna's classmates judge her for her mature musical talent, but with the help of her friends, she overcomes the challenges and sees everyone for their unique qualities." Shamita, 12, Ohio

Do you have a film or TV show to recommend to other kids? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

THIS WEEK'S WATCH LIST

Lego: BrickToons
(Disney+)
A new series of shorts features beloved Pixar characters in Lego brick form. The episodes include a Land of the Dead sing-along with *Coco*'s Miguel, a field trip with Nemo and Dory, and a story about *The Incredibles*' Parr family saving their neighborhood from villains.

Dancing with the Stars
(Hulu) (ABC) Tuesdays at 8 p.m. ET
This popular competition pairs celebrities with dance pros to perform choreographed routines for expert judges. Two of Team USA's bronze medalists from the Paris Olympics are competitors this season: gymnast Stephen Nedoroscik and rugby star Ilona Maher.

Animal Genius
(National Geographic) (Hulu)
Join wildlife biologist Liz Bonnin as she travels the world to uncover animals' amazing survival strategies. She meets with top scientists and explores groundbreaking research on animal behavior, like the synchronized hatching of sea turtles and the way meerkats communicate.

GETTY IMAGES; NFL; DISNEY (2); LEGO/DISNEY/PIXAR; NAT GEO; ON LEFT PAGE: UNIVERSAL PICTURES; GETTY IMAGES; BOOKS: COURTESY OF PUBLISHER (3)

DID YOU KNOW?
The first PlayStation console was released in the US in 1995.

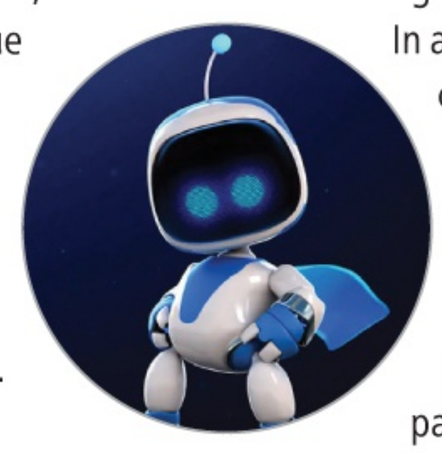
Astro Bot

A rescue mission out in space

Astro Bot is a new platformer adventure game. It was recently released exclusively for the PlayStation 5.

The game stars the character Astro, who is a PlayStation mascot. Astro first appeared in a set of minigames released in 2013. The new game is the third in a space-set series filled with robots, aliens, and wild environments. The first standalone game, Astro's Rescue Mission, was released for PlayStation VR in 2018. A sequel, Astro's Playroom, was a free game that came with every PlayStation 5 when it was released in 2020.

The new game combines the best aspects of the franchise and includes exciting gameplay, creative new worlds, and tributes to 30 years of other PlayStation classics. The adventure begins with Astro and other characters traveling in a flying PS5. When it is attacked, more than 300 Bots are scattered across space. Among the missing ones are 150 "VIPs" that are inspired by characters from other games. Astro sets off to rescue them on a Dual Speeder, which looks like a PS5 controller.



The game takes place across 80 levels, 50 planets, and six galaxies. In addition to the usual movement and fighting controls, Astro can use 15 other fun features to defeat enemies and clear levels. For example, a sponge power lets the robot suck up water and get huge; Handy-D, a monkey, gives Astro the power to swing, climb, and slam; and Barkster the Bulldog sends Astro smashing through enemies. Overall, the gameplay is fast and exciting and similar to an action-packed Super Mario game—but with robots.

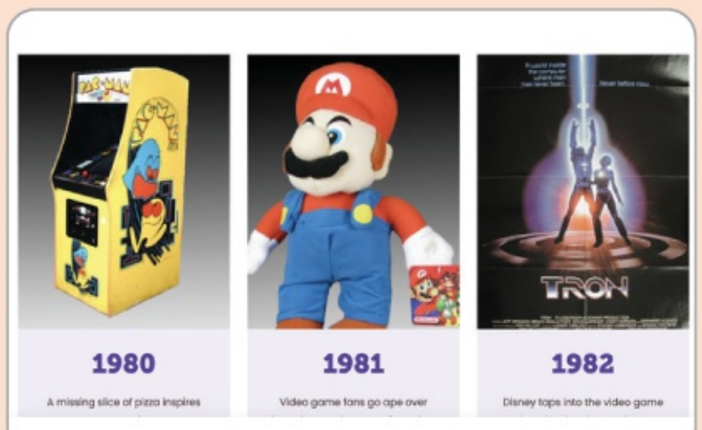
PODCAST OF THE WEEK

SNOOP AND SNIFFY: INTERNATIONAL CRIME FIGHTERS

Major podcast platforms

This story series follows British dog detective Snoop and his rookie puppy partner, Sniffy. Each week, they are tasked with solving mysteries—such as cases that involve ghost chases and missing pearls—in the town of Pflugerville.

WEBSITE OF THE WEEK



VIDEO GAME HISTORY TIMELINE

tinyurl.com/TWJUS-GameHistory

Created by the Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, New York, this site features a timeline tracking the history of video games from the 1940s to today. Learn about the programmers who pioneered gaming and discover fun facts, like how Pac-Man was inspired by a slice of pizza.

VIDEO OF THE WEEK

29,000 FEET UP MOUNT EVEREST

tinyurl.com/TWJUS-Everest

Mount Everest has the world's highest peak, and the trek to the 29,032-foot summit is dangerous even for experienced climbers. A company that makes drones with high-definition cameras filmed this flight up the snow-covered mountain so everyone can see what the journey looks like.

SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT (2); GOKIDGO; THE STRONG NATIONAL MUSEUM OF PLAY; DJI VIA YOUTUBE

BOOK OF THE WEEK

The Time Travel Twins

By James Patterson and Tad Safran

(Jimmy Patterson Books)

Twins Pew and Basket long to escape the miserable orphanage where they have lived since they were babies. Thanks to Pew's heightened sense of smell and Basket's incredible hearing, the 12-year-olds determine that the staffers at the orphanage are having a special celebration. While the workers are distracted by the party, Pew and Basket attempt to escape by running out the front door of the orphanage. But they don't get far because guard dogs chase them down. When Pew and Basket are returned to the orphanage, they learn that their punishment is to spend a year apart from each other. They are devastated, but then a mysterious man appears in their room and claims he's a time traveler who has been sent to find them. When he tries to leave, Pew and Basket hold onto him and they travel through a portal back in time to the 1700s. Pew and Basket go on an adventure through history, unlocking secrets of their past and discovering a family treasure. A mix of historical fiction and fantasy, this is the first book in a new series, and it ends on a cliff-hanger. You might like that the book's narrator often directly addresses the reader.

ASK THE AUTHOR

James Patterson

We spoke to the author of the Book of the Week.

What inspired this book?
I want to get kids reading. I hope they realize that reading is cool—that it's fun. I've always wanted to do that. My mission is that when a child finishes one of my books, they'll say, give me another book. That's a big win.

Do you have a favorite historical time period?
I think it would be great to experience life during the Renaissance in the 1400s and 1500s in Europe.

Did you enjoy reading when you were a child?
I wasn't a big reader growing up. When I was in college, I started scribbling out ideas for stories.

Why do you enjoy writing for kids?
I can let loose and be funny, and I enjoy that.

What did you dream of doing when you were younger?
I wanted to play professional basketball in the NBA.

READER RECOMMENDS

The One and Only Ruby *By Katherine Applegate*

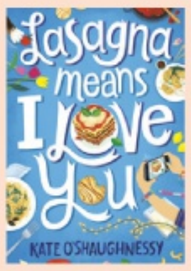
"This book is about an elephant named Ruby who is living at a park in a herd. In this story, elephants celebrate their Tuskdays when their tusks grow in. But Ruby does not want to have a Tuskday because she does not want to grow up. We like this story because it is from Ruby's perspective. The story is part of a collection that includes *The One and Only Ivan* and *The One and Only Bob*." Luna, 10, and Toby, 8, Colorado

Do you have a book to recommend? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

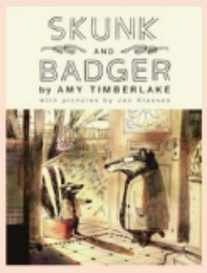
4 fiction picks that are full of heart

Faced with unexpected challenges, the characters in these stories don't give up.

The Firefly Summer
By Morgan Matson
(Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers)
Ryanna accepts an invitation from her late mom's parents to spend the summer with them in Pennsylvania. She meets a bunch of cousins for the first time, learns about her mom, and even hunts for treasure while trying to solve a mystery. *Ages 8–12*



Lasagna Means I Love You
By Kate O'Shaughnessy
(Knopf Books for Young Readers)
When Mo is sent to live in foster care after her grandma dies, cooking is what brings her comfort. She starts a recipe website, hoping others will share their family dishes. A delightful twist gives Mo a new beginning. This story takes place in New York City, and the book includes several recipes. *Ages 8–12*



Skunk and Badger
By Amy Timberlake, illustrated by Jon Klassen
(Algonquin Young Readers)
Badger is a rock scientist who lives alone in his aunt's brownstone. One day, he gets a surprising roommate—Skunk. Badger doesn't think living with Skunk will work out, especially when Skunk invites chickens over. Will they be able to overcome their differences? *Ages 7–10*

Ungifted
By Gordon Korman
(Balzer + Bray)
Donovan thinks he's going to get in trouble for a goofy prank he pulled. Due to a mix-up, he's accidentally sent to a program for gifted and talented students. Although he's not strong in math and science, Donovan finds his talent and makes friends. The book's sequel, *Supergifted*, is also hilarious and heartwarming. *Ages 10 and up*

BOOKS: COURTESY OF PUBLISHERS; AUTHOR: STEPHANIE DIANI; GETTY IMAGES

SUBMIT A STORY!

You can use your issue of *The Week Junior* to inspire a story—then enter it for a chance to be featured on the Story Pirates Podcast! Find out more at theweekjunior.com/creativewriting.

Where kids are the creative geniuses

The award-winning Story Pirates Podcast takes stories submitted by kids and turns them into comedy sketches and songs performed by professional comedians and musicians. "We love reading any and all stories by kids," said Benjamin Salka, co-founder and chief executive officer of Story Pirates. You can find a special episode of Story Pirates featuring *The Week Junior* on Wondery and other major podcast platforms.

Try writing your own stories

Find out how to tap into the power of your imagination to capture your creative ideas.

Creative writing is a fun way to express your thoughts and emotions. One form of creative writing is a short story. "A story is like a playground for your imagination," Lee Overtree, co-founder and creative director of Story Pirates, told *The Week Junior*. (To find out more about Story Pirates, see the box at top right.) "It's a great place to experiment and try new ideas," Overtree said. Here's how you can get started.

Forget the rules

You may know what you would like your story to be about—or you might not, and that's OK. "Sometimes it can feel intimidating to write a story because you have an idea of what the story has to be," said Overtree. "But there is no right or wrong when you're writing a story." Creative writing doesn't have to follow traditional rules of writing. When inspiration hits you, be ready to jot down the idea. Keep a pencil and notebook nearby or in your backpack or use a notes app on a device.

Dream up characters.

Start with a character

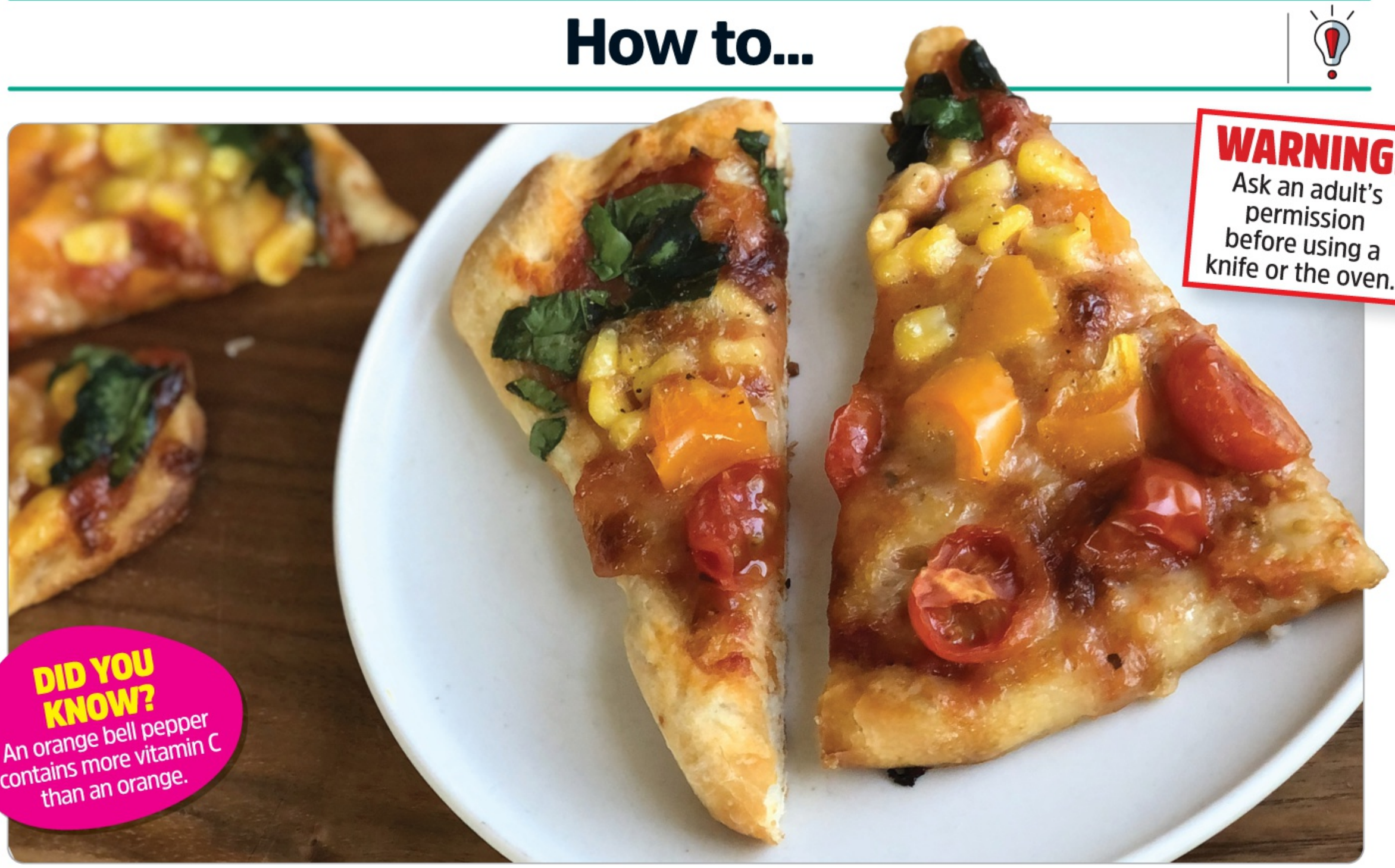
A great place to begin any story is with a main character. Think about who you would like this character to be, whether a person, an animal, or a mythical creature. Next, develop your character by answering a few questions: How does my character spend their time? What does my character love? What are they afraid of? "Most important, ask yourself, What does my character want?" said Overtree. "Deciding what your character wants to happen in their life will be the engine that drives your story." It can be anything! For example, one story written by Olivia, age 12, and featured on Story Pirates was about nachos that want to take over the planet.

Put an obstacle in their way

Once you know what your character wants, you can add drama or humor to your story by putting obstacles in their way. "This is where writing a story gets really fun," said Overtree. "Those obstacles can be annoying or even dangerous." This is also when you can decide on the tone of your story. Ask yourself if you want your story to be serious or silly. "Many kids find that being silly is a great way to activate their imagination," said Overtree. "So if you're stuck for ideas about what obstacles to put in the way of your character, think of the funniest, weirdest thing you can."

Read and revise

An important part of the creative writing process is continuing to work on what you wrote to try to make it even better. "Writing isn't meant to be perfect the first time," said Overtree. "That's why we have drafts and revisions." Try reading the first draft of your story out loud, and share it with a trusted family member or friend. Did your story make sense? Did it get the reaction you had in mind? For example, if you expected your friend to laugh, did they? You can go back to your story and make changes to get it to a place you're happy with. Then enjoy it, whether your story is meant to be just for yourself or shared with family and friends.



WARNING! Ask an adult's permission before using a knife or the oven.

DID YOU KNOW? An orange bell pepper contains more vitamin C than an orange.

Make a tasty veggie rainbow pizza

Ingredients

- 1 pound store-bought, uncooked pizza dough, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 20 cherry or grape tomatoes
- 1 orange bell pepper
- ½ cup torn baby spinach
- ¼ cup marinara sauce
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella
- ½ cup frozen corn, thawed

Instructions

1. Heat oven to 425° F. Bring the dough to room temperature and lightly grease 2 baking sheets with olive oil. You will be making 4 personal pizzas.
2. Cut the tomatoes in half and chop the bell pepper. Tear spinach into small pieces.
3. Cut the dough into 4 equal pieces and gently stretch each piece to form a flat pizza shape. (Ask an adult if you need help.) Place on baking sheets.
4. Spread 1 tablespoon of marinara sauce over each of the crusts, leaving a ½-inch border around the edge. Sprinkle ¼ cup mozzarella evenly on top of the sauce on each crust.
5. Arrange the vegetable toppings evenly over the mozzarella in the order of a rainbow, such as red, orange, yellow, and green.
6. Using pot holders, put the baking sheets in the oven. Bake for 18 to 22 minutes or until the dough is golden and the cheese is melted and bubbly. Carefully remove the baking trays from the oven using pot holders. Let cool and slice into pieces.

ECO TIP OF THE WEEK: HELP YOUR HOME SMELL NICE

Everyone likes their home to smell good. While stores sell air fresheners to scent your home, they may contain chemicals that can be irritating to some people and pets. To make your home smell better naturally, there are several things you can do. With an adult's permission, crack open the windows on nice days to circulate fresh air. You can also talk to your family about putting fragrant house plants, like eucalyptus, lemon balm, or orchids, around your home. Baking soda is a natural way to absorb odors. Add half a cup of baking soda and six drops of an essential oil to a mason jar, poke holes in the lid to make a vent, and place on a shelf in the kitchen or laundry area.

Let in some fresh air.

ERICA CLARK FOR STONE KITCHEN CREATIVE; GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2); STORY PIRATES

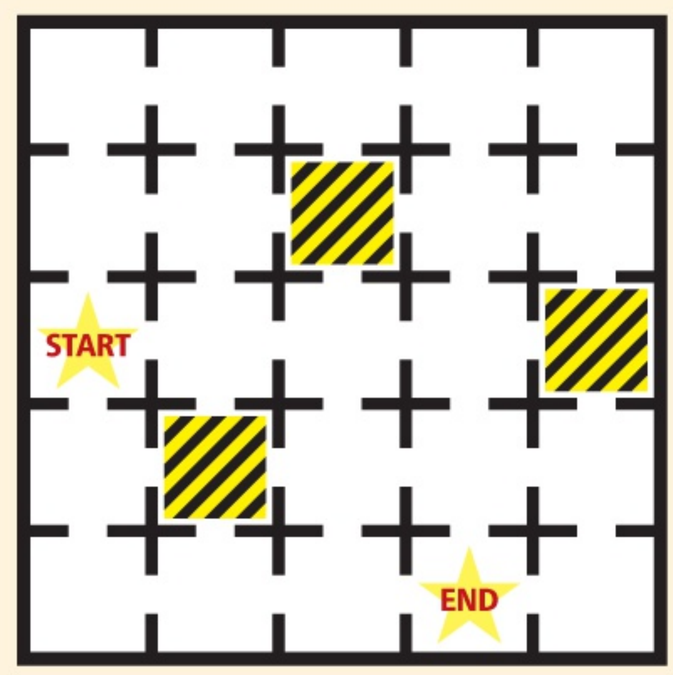
Word ladder

To change the word LEFT into the word HAND, use each clue to fill in a word that is only one letter different from the word before it. If you get stuck, try solving from the bottom up.

	L	E	F	T
Gave something temporarily ▶				
"This little piggy ___ to market …" ▶				
Would like to have ▶				
Skin bump that's said to be caught from toads (but isn't really) ▶				
Give strong words of caution ▶				
Knitter's wool ▶				
Unit of measurement that is three feet long ▶				
Not easy and not soft ▶				
	H	A	N	D

DO NOT ENTER

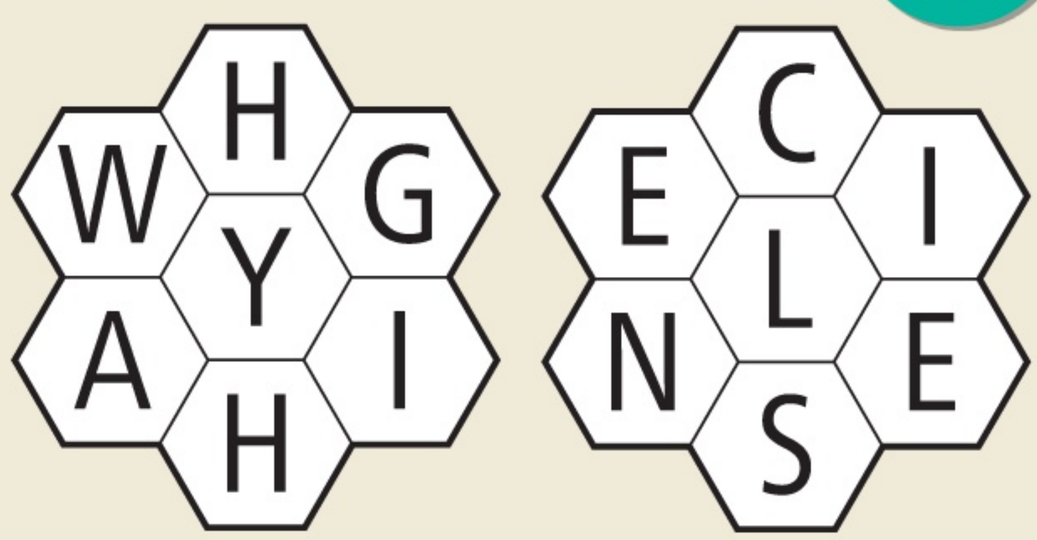
Draw one continuous path from START to END that goes through every box except the ones containing obstacles. Your path may not cross itself, and there is only one solution. (NEED A HINT? Check the bottom of the page.)



STEPPING STONES

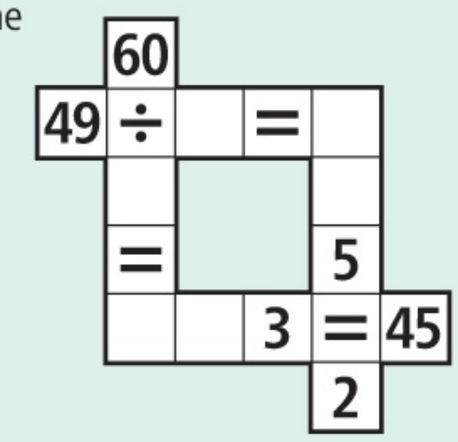
ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

Each figure hides a seven-letter word associated with driving. To find each one, start anywhere and move in an unbroken path through letters that share a border (no jumping!), using each letter once.



Crossmath

Fill each empty box with a number or a mathematical symbol (+, −, ×, or ÷) to complete the equations across and down. A symbol can be used more than once.



Spot the difference

These two pictures of a pumpkin pie appear to be the same, but take a closer look. There are actually five differences. Can you see them?

PUZZLES BY PUZZABILITY

Do not enter hint: Start by moving down.

That's unbelievable!

Crop artists bloom at state fair

Visitors to the Minnesota State Fair had a chance to view 354 of the state's finest pieces of crop art—artwork made from seeds, beans, and other plant materials—as part of an annual contest. The *Minnesota Star Tribune* featured some of this year's funniest crop creations, including a "Crop-Tart" toaster pastry (above) and an anglerfish with a glowing lure declaring that crop art is making it "light headed." Others were more meaningful, such as a tribute to artist Keith Haring, who once declared that "art is for everybody," depicting people around a giant corn husk and the words "crop art is for everybody."

Smart parrot breaks world record

Meet Apollo, the super-smart parrot with the intelligence of a human toddler. The 4-year-old African gray parrot recently achieved the Guinness World Records title for the most items identified by a parrot in three minutes. He correctly recognized and spoke the names of 12 objects, including a book, a bug, and a figurine of the video game character Wario. Apollo lives in Florida with his owners Dalton and Victoria Mason, who said they are raising him to be "the smartest parrot ever." They say he likes showing off his skills, but when he's not training, Apollo loves to relax in the sunshine, play with his toys, and enjoy his favorite snack: pistachio nuts.

Jumbo pigeon to land in New York

Some say New York City has more pigeons than people, so it's about time the city puts up a monument to its feathered residents. For 18 months starting in October, a huge pigeon sculpture named *Dinosaur* will be installed on the High Line, a park built on a former elevated railway above Manhattan. Created by Colombian artist Iván Argote, the sculpture stands 16 feet tall and is designed to celebrate pigeons—which, like all birds, are descended from dinosaurs. Cecilia Alemani, the High Line's director of art, said she can't wait for *Dinosaur* to add "wit to the skyline."

Reading, writing, and...ice pops?

Along with studying math and spelling, children in the UK could soon be taking lessons in licking ice pops. Scientists say enjoying a frozen treat teaches children important scientific ideas, and they have recommended that it be added to the national curriculum. Aylin Ozkan from the Royal Society of Chemistry said, "By the age of 11, all children should start to understand how temperature works and how heating and cooling can change things. What better prop is there to help explain this?" Is this story true, or is it a frozen fiction?*

*Real! UK scientific organizations published recommendations for elementary school lessons, and licking ice pops is one of the suggestions for chemistry. "Essential experiences like this promote learning on a personal level," said Aylin Ozkan.

MINNESOTA STATE FAIR; BOB CROSLIN/GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS; IVAN ARGOTE; GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3)

Your turn

Editor's note

In this week's How To section, we're excited to bring you an article about creative writing (p24). Have you ever tried writing a short story—or, if you have, would you like to try it again? Our article includes some smart tips from the creators of the Story Pirates Podcast to inspire you. One of the suggestions I appreciated the most is about the importance of rereading and revising your work. "Writing isn't meant to be perfect the first time," Story Pirates co-founder Lee Overtree told us. Our editorial team follows that advice every week! *The Week Junior* will also be featured in an upcoming episode of the podcast. We hope you'll tune in! In addition, Story Pirates invites you to submit a story based on something you've seen in *The Week Junior* for a chance to be featured on the podcast. You can find out more at theweekjunior.com/creativewriting.

Andrea Barbalich
Editor-in-Chief

Inspired by outer space

"I was super excited to see an article about Mars and NASA in a recent edition of *The Week Junior*. I had just completed reading the book *Hidden Figures* about three Black female mathematicians who worked at NASA. I built a 3D-printed monument replica, and I named it 'Together, we lift off!' to honor the amazing contributions of the three female space trailblazers. I also wrote a poem about the mathematicians and built this Lego set of the Saturn V rocket."

Aayush, 9, California

Have you done something interesting or raised money for a cause you care about? Whatever you're up to, we want to hear about it at *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

JOKE OF THE WEEK
How do eggs like to travel?
In yolkswaggons

CHARITY OF THE WEEK

Food Forward

This organization works to end food waste. It collects excess fruits and vegetables from farmers markets, wholesalers, and people. It then donates the produce to food banks, youth shelters, and more, where it can be given to people in need or used to prepare fresh meals. Since its founding in 2009, it has rescued and distributed more than 442 million pounds of food. Find out more at foodforward.org.

What makes your grandparents special?

Laney, who is 8 years old and from New York, told us that her grandparents are important to her because they are kind, caring, and awesome. A favorite memory is going to a lake with them. To celebrate your grandparent or any other special older person, go to kidstheweekjunior.com/activities to print out a form (like the one at right). Fill it out, then have an adult email it to us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*. We'll feature some of the responses in future issues.

Why my grandparents are important to me

Grandparents' Day is coming up on September 8, 2024. This is a day when people of different generations, like grandparents and their grandchildren, are encouraged to connect. We invite you to use this form to write down your thoughts about one or more of your grandparents—or any special older people in your life. You can also share this form with them. They may enjoy knowing what you have to say! We would also love to read what you write and see your artwork. To share your thoughts and drawing with us, ask an adult to email your form to hello@theweekjunior.com. Extra forms can be found at theweekjunior.com/activities.

First name Laney Age 8 State New York

In honor of Grandparents' Day, explain why your grandparents are important to you.
My grandparents are important to me because they are so nice! I love that they also have a pool and hot tub!

If you could describe your grandparents in three words, which words would you choose?
kind, caring, Awesome!

What is your favorite memory of being with your grandparents?
My favorite memory is going to a lake!

Draw a picture of you with your grandparents.

By submitting this form, you give The Week Junior consent to print it in the magazine and online. Please get your parent/guardian's permission before

The Week Junior IT'S YOUR TURN Email your news, views, and photos to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

Your turn

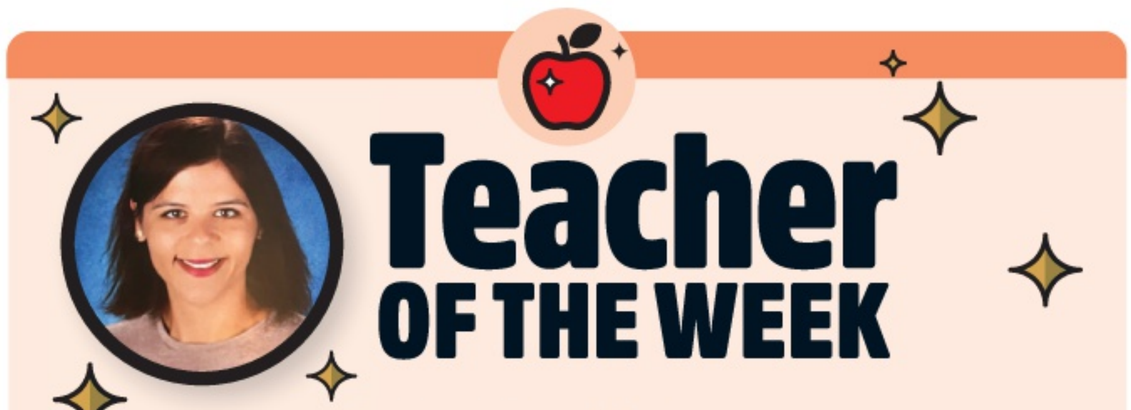
YOUR PHOTOS

We'd love to see pictures you've taken or pictures with you in them! Have an adult email them to us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*, along with anything you would like us to know about what's happening in the photo.

◀ "We made the fox pencil cups from the How To section of the magazine using recycled cans." London, 9, and Ariana, 9, New York

▲ "We loved baking Alisa's cookies on National Chocolate Chip Cookie Day. Thank you for the recipe!" Jem, 7, Rupert, 10, and Imogen, 5, Washington, DC

▶ "We read *The Week Junior* on a recent train ride." Avery, 8, and Raegan, 4, Illinois



Teacher OF THE WEEK

Teacher's Name: **Mrs. Jensen**

School: **Reed Elementary**

"Mrs. Jensen is the best teacher ever. She makes school awesome by encouraging us to do fun art projects. She even has us do word art, which is making a picture out of our spelling words. She is a dual-language teacher and also teaches us Spanish! She is an amazing musician, too. Mrs. Jensen gives us class money, and at the end of the year, we have a humongous class store. She is so kind and helps everyone."

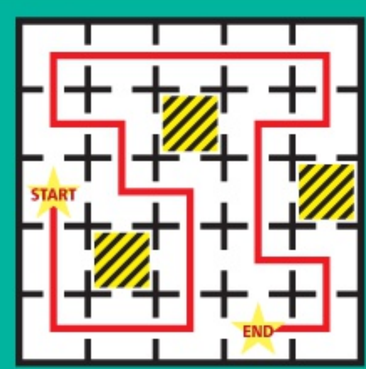
Mady, 11, Idaho

Nominate your teacher for Teacher of the Week! Send your reason for the nomination, a photo of your teacher, and your school's name and address to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

Puzzle answers (from page 26)

Word ladder

l	**e**	**f**	**t**
l	e	n	t
w	e	n	t
w	a	n	t
w	a	r	t
w	a	r	n
y	a	r	n
y	a	r	d
h	a	r	d
h	**a**	**n**	**d**



Stepping stones
highway, license

	60			
49	÷	7	=	7
	4			−
	=			5
15	×	3	=	45
		2		

Quiz answers (from page 30)

1 b) Latte **2** Mama **3** False. It is the fifth longest running. **4** b) Yosemite **5** c) The UK **6** Brightbill **7** True **8** c) San Francisco 49ers **9** *The Night Watch* **10** True **11** b) Minnesota **12** a) 108 **13** False. It is "Freed Between the Lines." **14** 1700s **15** c) 12

We want to hear from you! To have your letters, photos, nominations, recommendations, or ideas considered for inclusion in the magazine, please include your full name, age, and state with your submission. By emailing your submission to us, you give *The Week Junior* consent to publish it in the magazine and online. Please get your parent/guardian's permission before sending anything to us.

GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

How much of this week's news can you remember?

1 What type of pumpkin spice coffee beverage was created in 2003?

a) Cappuccino b) Latte c) Macchiato

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

2 In recently analyzed recordings, what word did chimpanzees Johnny and Renata appear to say?

3 True or false? *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* is now the longest-running play on Broadway.

True ☐ False ☐

4 Rock climbers in which US national park helped officials protect nesting peregrine falcons?

a) Yellowstone b) Yosemite c) Zion

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

5 Which country recently passed a law restricting junk food advertising?

a) Australia b) New Zealand c) The UK

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

6 In the movie *The Wild Robot*, what is the name of the baby goose Roz takes care of?

7 True or false? Odaraia alata was a prehistoric sea creature shaped like a taco.

True ☐ False ☐

8 Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Justin Jefferson scored a 97-yard touchdown in a win over what NFL team?

a) Baltimore Ravens b) Detroit Lions

c) San Francisco 49ers

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

2

1

3

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

9

12

9 Scientists recently found arsenic sulfide minerals in what famous painting by Rembrandt?

10 True or false? Kendrick Lamar was the first rapper to win a Pulitzer Prize.

True ☐ False ☐

11 Two Amur tiger cubs recently made their debut at a zoo in which US state?

a) Maryland

b) Minnesota

c) North Carolina

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

12 About how many days did it take Lael Wilcox to ride a bike all the way around the world?

a) 108

b) 118

c) 128

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

13 True or false? The theme of this year's Banned Books Week is "Read Between the Lines."

True ☐ False ☐

14 In the new book titled *The Time Travel Twins*, Pew and Basket travel back to what time period?

15 How many objects was Apollo the parrot able to correctly identify in three minutes?

a) 8 b) 10 c) 12

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

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